

**Newton on 'Fossil Birds.'**\* — This is a brief survey of our present knowledge of fossil birds, the subject being treated in outline. It is, however, an important and instructive summary of the subject, presented by an eminent authority. As indicated by the title, it formed one of the long series of important papers read at the Second International Congress held last year at Budapest. — J. A. A.

**Slater on the Geographical Distribution of Birds.**† — In this paper of some thirty-five pages, Dr. Slater has summarized the recent progress in our knowledge of the geographical distribution of birds, the period covered being mainly the interval since the publication of his well-known address on Geographical Zoölogy delivered before the Biological Section of the British Association at its meeting at Belfast in 1875. He briefly restates, with some qualifications, his views then and previously set forth, respecting the principal faunal regions and subregions of the earth's surface, based on a study of the geographical distribution of birds, and notes, *passim*, the leading recent authorities upon their ornithology. This is followed by an appendix of eight pages, in which are given the titles of the principal publications referred to, 125 in number. This list, with that contained in his British Association Address, forms a most convenient and useful guide to the more important works and papers bearing on the special subject here treated.

As is well known, Dr. Slater's division of the earth's surface into six primary ontological divisions of coördinate value has been the subject of criticism from many sources; yet, while practically admitting that some other method of division might prove more in accordance with facts, he expresses himself as in the main, "after more than thirty-five years close attention to the subject," well satisfied with his own system, and believes (with Wallace, whose adoption of his principal regions he "points out with pride") that, in the words of Mr. Wallace, "in geographical equality, compactness of area, and facility of definition, they are beyond all comparison better than any others that have yet been proposed for the purpose of facilitating the study of geographical distribution" — as though "practical convenience," instead of the facts of distribution, were to be the deciding test in favor of this or that author's scheme! Thus, as Dr. Slater says, many writers on zoö-geography have treated his "Nearctic Region as merely a piece of the Palæarctic," and he admits that "there are, no

\* Fossil Birds. From the forthcoming "Dictionary of Birds." Delivered before the Second International Ornithological Congress, on the 18 May, 1891, by Alfred Newton, M. A., Prof. Zoöl. and Comp. Anat., etc., Cambridge, Magdalene College. Budapest, published at the Office of the Congress, 1891, 4to, pp. 16.

† The Geographical Distribution of Birds; an Address delivered before the Second International Ornithological Congress at Budapest, May, 1891, by Philip Lutley Slater M. A., Ph. D., F. R. S., Secretary to the Zoölogical Society of London. Budapest, 1891. Published at the Office of the Congress. 8vo., pp. 45.

On Recent Advances in our Knowledge of the Geographical Distribution of Birds. By P. L. Slater, M. A., Ph. D., F. R. S. *Ibis*, Oct., 1891, pp. 514-557.

doubt, grounds upon which this view may be supported"; but then the *inconvenience* of considering it a subregion of a primary circumpolar region must be duly regarded!

Dr. Sclater's paper was prepared for presentation at last year's International Ornithological Congress, and forms one of the memoirs published by the Congress; it also appears, as noted above, under a somewhat different and more explicit title, and "slightly modified," in 'The Ibis' for October last.—J. A. A.

**Sclater and Shelley on the Scansores and Cocyges.\***—Volume XIX of the British Museum Catalogue of Birds treats of seven families of birds, as follows: Rhamphastidæ, Galbulidæ, and Bucconidæ, by Mr. Sclater, and Indicatoridæ, Capitonidæ, Cuculidæ, and Musophagidæ, by Mr. Shelley. The number of species recognized is 448, of which only 32 are not represented in the British Museum. The total number of specimens belonging to these families in the British Museum collection is 9231, among which are 123 types of species, of which 73 are admitted as valid.

The work is similar in character to that of the preceding volumes, and therefore calls for no special comment. One genus and five species and subspecies appear to be here for the first time named, as follows: (1) *Urococcyx* Shelley, gen. nov., p. 398 (type *Phanicocephus erythrogathus* Hartl.); (2) *Xantholoma intermedia* Shelley, p. 97; (3) *Capito salvini* Shelley, p. 119, pl. v, fig. 4; (4) *Brachygalba fulviventris* Sclater, p. 172; (5) *Coccyzus dominicæ* Shelley (subsp. of *C. minor*), p. 306, pl. xii, fig. 1; and (6) *Centropus purpureus* Shelley, p. 348, pl. xiii.

In view of Mr. Shelley's treatment of *Coccyzus minor*, of which he recognizes two subspecies—*maynardi* Ridgw. and *dominicæ* subsp. nov.—we are surprised that he should lump all of the large *Piayas* under *Piaya cayana*, considering the wide distribution of the group, and the great range of variation in both size and color shown by specimens from distant points in the common habitat. Doubtless the extremes grade into each other through birds from intermediate localities, yet the birds from Mexico, Guatemala, Cayenne, and southern Brazil present average differences too well marked to be wholly ignored.

The volume is a most welcome continuation of this long series of invaluable handbooks.—J. A. A.

\* Catalogue | of the | Picariæ | in the | Collection | of the | British Museum. | — | Scansores and Cocyges, | containing the Families | Rhamphastidæ, Galbulidæ, and Bucconidæ, | by | P. L. Sclater, | and the Families | Indicatoridæ, Capitonidæ, Cuculidæ, | and Musophagidæ, | by | G. E. Shelley. | London: | Printed by order of the Trustees. | Sold by | Longmans & Co., 39 Paternoster Row; | B. Quaritch, 15 Piccadilly; Asher & Co., 13 Bedford Street, Covent Garden; | Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 57 Ludgate Hill; | and at the | British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, S. W. | 1891. 8vo. pp. xii+484, pl. xiii.= Vol. XIX of the Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum.